

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' EXPECTED AND ACTUAL PERCEPTION TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY AT JILIN HUAQIAO UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, CHINA

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Abstract: This research attempted to study the student's expected and actual perception towards the service quality of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages by using SERVQUAL model. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to second year students who are studying in the full-time program at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages. Then 120 questionnaires were valid and used for data analysis using Descriptive Statistics (Agreement and Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation) and Paired-sample t-test. The questionnaire in this research was adapted from the study A study of Parents', Perceptions and Satisfaction of Top Ten Known Centers in Bangkok by Saowaluck Ngamdustsadeepirom, (2004). The findings of this study showed that there was a significant difference between students' expected and actual perception towards service quality at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. The actual perception was higher than the expected perception.

Keywords: Service quality, Expected and Actual perception

Introduction

The historical development of private universities in China has taken place over little more than thirty years. As of June 2017, private universities in China totaled 735. But as the population has undergone economic and social change in China, college enrolment has faced a downward trend, due to increasing numbers of students opting to study overseas, private universities are under severe pressure. A comprehensive understanding of private universities, analyzing the factors influencing service satisfaction is extremely important in promoting rational education reform and improving the competitiveness of Chinese private universities. Private university is an important component of education in contemporary China. After more than 30 years of development, it has made a great contribution to the progress of Chinese higher education. In recent years, college entrance examination enrollment has decreased year by year. Meanwhile college acceptance rates have raised, the competition has gradually become increasingly fierce among the private colleges. However Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages is expecting to see an increase in student admissions in the future, and is aiming to ensure a stable and long-term development of the university. Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages is located at Changchun Jilin, China. There are many universities in China, and marketing is highly competitive. Therefore, the university faces a lot of competition; there is a need to force the university staff and administrators to conduct more studies on the students' perception and satisfaction. This study will focus on the students' perception of service quality at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages. And provide insights on how to reduce the gap between students' expectations and actual perceptions of service quality.

Research Objectives

The research was conducted for the following objectives:

1. To identify the students' expected perception of university service before they enrolled to study at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China.

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2. To identify the students' actual perception of university service after they enrolled to study at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China.
3. To compare the students' expected and actual perception of university service in Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China.

Literature Review

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1990), subjective measurement of service quality is an attempt to find out the difference between consumers' expected perceptions and their perceptions of the actual service quality provided. Their research clearly professed that only when customer expectations are exceeded, will good service quality exist. SERVQUAL is a Service Quality evaluation system to evaluate the Quality of service for customers. Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest and debate in the research literature because of the difficulties in both defining it and measuring it with no overall consensus emerging on either (Wisniewski, 2001).

Sangeeta, Devinder and Sabita (2003) measure service quality in education through tangibility, ability, transitivity and attitude. Their study concerned the head of human resources management departments who engaged in advanced studies at university. A defect in the research was the lack of samples and this weakened the validity and reliability of the measurements. There are four factors that influence Customers' Expectations of Services are as follows:

1. Personal needs;
2. Word-of-mouth communications;
3. Past experience. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) focus on three aspects: personal needs, word of mouth communication, and past experiences. Customers will compare their expectation with their real experiences. If the outcomes over and above expectations, that's means that is a positive discrepancy (Oliver, 1980).

If the outcomes meet the expectations, there is no discrepancy (Oliver, 1980). But if the customer experiences a short fall in their expectations, then there is a negative discrepancy (Oliver, 1980), and the discrepancy will includes satisfaction or dissatisfaction. According to Asubonteng (1998), people differ in their perception of reality depending on their experiences, personal situations and life histories (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Conceptual Framework

SERVQUAL model were used to measure the students' Expected Perception and Actual Perception in service quality of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages

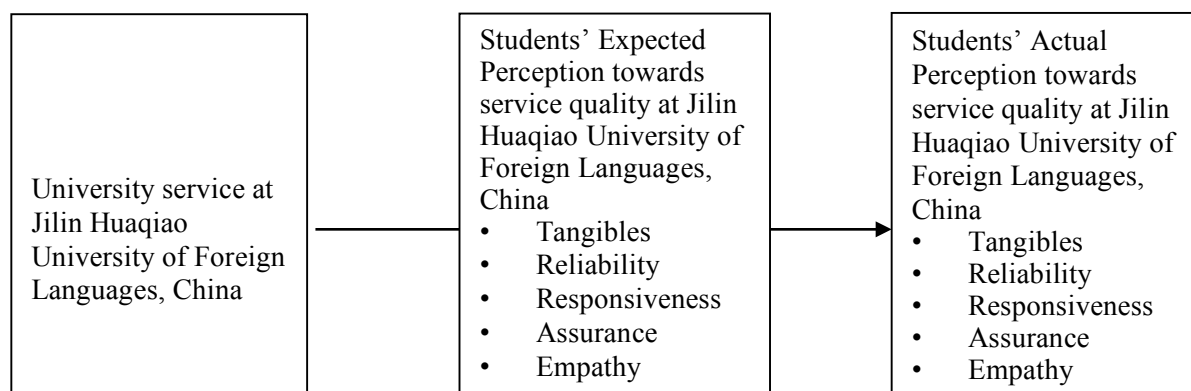


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Instrument

This study aimed to compare the difference between students' expected and actual perception towards service quality at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China during the academic year of 2017-2018. This research was designed as a quantitative and comparative study. The Questionnaire had totally 20 items.

Part I of the questionnaire aimed to survey students' expected perception of university service quality before they enrolled to study at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages.

Part II of the questionnaire aimed to survey students' actual perception of university service quality after they enrolled to study at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages.

The questionnaire that used this study was adapted from (Saowaluck Ngamdustsadeepirom, 2004) which consists of 20 items under five dimensions of service quality.

Population

The target respondents of this study were 120 second year students who currently studying at Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages.

Research Objective One

Table 1 showed that total mean score of students' expected perception on service quality for Tangible dimension is 3.88. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 1: Students' expected perception on service quality for tangible of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Expected Tangibles	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
1.1 University has suitable academic media for you e.g. content of worksheet.	3.89	0.84	High
1.2 The area of university and equipment is adequate for you learning e.g. Table , Chair	3.95	0.80	High
1.3 Classroom is suitable e.g. clean, adequate light.	3.90	0.88	High
1.4 Staff or instructor are well dressed and Appear neat.	3.79	0.86	High
Total	3.88	0.61	High

Table 2 showed that total mean score of students' expected perception on service quality for Reliability dimension is 3.81. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 2: Students' expected perception on service quality for reliability of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Expected Reliability	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
2.1 The curriculum is reliable e.g. testing and assessment.	3.79	0.81	High
2.2 University provides the content of each subject according to program.	3.72	0.87	High
2.3 University provides operating hours on time e.g. opening closing and schedule time.	3.87	0.83	High
2.4 Staff or instructor can answer to questions accurately e.g. service or guide studying.	3.86	0.85	High
Total	3.81	0.64	High

Table 3 showed that total mean score of students' expected perception on service quality for Responsiveness dimension is 3.81. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 3: Students' expected perception on service quality for Responsiveness of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Expected Responsiveness	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
3.1 Staff or instructor can tell you exactly about technique for teaching or method for your development e.g. there is orientation to inform teaching method before you studying.	3.84	0.83	High
3.2 Staff or instructor is warmly and pleasantly welcome you.	3.76	0.86	High
3.3 Staff or instructor is always willing to help you.	3.86	0.81	High
3.4 Staff or instructor responses to your request promptly.	3.78	0.80	High
Total	3.81	0.62	High

Table 4 indicated that total mean score of students' expected perception on service quality for Assurance dimension is 3.89. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 4: Students' expected perception on service quality for Assurance of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Expected Assurance	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
4.1 You can trust staff and instructor of university e.g. ability and knowledge.	3.91	0.80	High
4.2 You feel safe to be with University's staff or	3.84	0.89	High
4.3 Staffs or instructors are polite.	3.91	0.81	High
4.4 Staff or instructor tries to develop themselves in term of knowledge, teaching method and service for doing their job well.	3.89	0.80	High
Total	3.89	0.62	High

Table 5 indicated that total mean score of students' expected perception on service quality for Empathy dimension is 3.81. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 5: Students' expected perception on service quality for Empathy of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Expected Empathy	Mean	S. D	Interpretation
5.1 Staff or instructor gives you personal attention.	3.69	0.83	High
5.2 Staff or instructor know you're your needs are.	3.76	0.87	High
5.3 You receive services of the same quality as do other students.	3.83	0.86	High
5.4 University has operating hours convenient to all their customer e.g. opening or closing time, schedule time.	3.95	0.85	High
Total	3.81	0.64	High

Research Objective Two

Table 6 indicated that total mean score of students' actual perception on service quality for tangible dimension is 4.26. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 6: Students' actual perception on service quality for tangible of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Actual Tangibles		Mean	S. D	Interpretation
1.1	University has suitable academic media for you e.g. content of worksheet.	4.15	0.76	High
1.2	The area of university and equipment is adequate for you learning e.g. Table , Chair	4.27	0.75	High
1.3	Classroom is suitable e.g. clean, adequate light.	4.24	0.74	High
1.4	Staff or instructor are well dressed and appear	4.39	0.62	High
Total		4.26	0.53	High

Table 7 indicated that total mean score of students' actual perception on service quality for reliability dimension is 4.21. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 7: Students' actual perception on service quality for reliability of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Actual Reliability		Mean	S. D	Interpretation
2.1	The curriculum is reliable e.g. testing and assessment.	4.27	0.63	High
2.2	University provides the content of each subject according to program.	4.14	0.78	High
2.3	University provides operating hours on time e.g. opening closing and schedule time.	4.21	0.79	High
2.4	Staff or instructor can answer to questions accurately e.g. service or guide studying.	4.23	0.70	High
Total		4.21	0.52	High

Table 8 indicated that total mean score of students' actual perception on service quality for responsiveness dimension is 4.35. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 8: Students' actual perception on service quality for responsiveness of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Actual Responsiveness		Mean	S. D	Interpretation
3.1	Staff or instructor can tell you exactly about technique for teaching or method for your development e.g. there is orientation to inform teaching method before you studying.	4.50	3.70	High
3.2	Staff or instructor is warmly and pleasantly welcome you.	4.30	0.75	High
3.3	Staff or instructor is always willing to help you.	4.32	0.74	High
3.4	Staff or instructor responses to you request promptly.	4.28	0.65	High
Total		4.35	1.06	High

Table 9 indicated that total mean score of students' actual perception on service quality for assurance dimension is 4.35. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 9: Students' actual perception on service quality for assurance of Jilin Huaqiao University

Actual Assurance		Mean	S. D	Interpretation
4.1	You can trust staff and instructor of university e.g. ability and knowledge.	4.28	0.67	High
4.2	You feel safe to be with university's staff or instructor.	4.30	0.70	High
4.3	Staffs or instructors are polite.	4.43	0.64	High
4.4	Staff or instructor tries to develop themselves in term of knowledge, teaching method and service for doing their job well.	4.41	0.67	High
Total		4.35	0.45	High

Table 10 indicated that total mean score of students' actual perception on service quality for empathy dimension is 4.19. According to the scale of interpretation, it means that students' expected perception were regarded high.

Table 10: Students' actual perception on service quality for empathy of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Actual Empathy		Mean	S. D	Interpretation
5.1	Staff or instructor gives you personal attention.	4.24	0.75	High
5.2	Staff or instructor know what your needs are.	4.26	0.77	High
5.3	You receive services of the same quality as do other students.	4.13	0.83	High
5.4	University has operating hours convenient to all their customer e.g. opening or closing time, schedule time.	4.11	0.92	High
Total		4.19	0.63	High

The summary of students' expected service quality and actual service quality of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China was shown in table 11. The total mean score of expected service quality was 3.84 and actual service quality was 4.27. According to interpretation of scores, both are rated as high.

Table 11: Summary of the overall dimension of students' perceived and actual service quality of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Service Quality	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Tangible	3.88	0.61	High
Reliability	3.81	0.64	High
Responsiveness	3.81	0.62	High
Assurance	3.89	0.62	High
Empathy	3.81	0.75	High
Total Expected Service Quality	3.84	0.50	High
Tangible	4.26	0.53	High
Reliability	4.21	0.52	High
Responsiveness	4.35	1.06	High
Assurance	4.35	0.45	High
Empathy	4.19	0.63	High
Total Actual Service Quality	4.27	0.45	High

Research Objective Three

According to table 12, research finding showed that the significance of each service quality dimension for expected and actual service quality such as Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy at 0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus there was a significant difference at the level of 0.05 between the expected service quality and actual service quality of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China.

Table 12: Comparison between the expected service quality and actual service quality of of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages, China. (N=120)

Service Quality		Mean	SD	t	Sig
Pair 1	Actual Tangibles	4.26	0.53	5.66	0.00*
	Expected Tangibles	3.88	0.61	5.66	0.00*
Pair 2	Actual Reliability	4.21	0.52	6.15	0.00*
	Expected Reliability	3.81	0.64	6.15	0.00*
Pair 3	Actual Responsiveness	4.35	1.06	4.94	0.00*
	Expected Responsiveness	3.81	0.62	4.94	0.00*
Pair 4	Actual Assurance	4.35	0.45	7.39	0.00*
	Expected Assurance	3.89	0.62	7.39	0.00*
Pair 5	Actual Empathy	4.19	0.63	4.67	0.00*
	Expected Empathy	3.81	0.64	4.67	0.00*
Total	Actual Perception	4.27	0.45	7.54	0.00*
	Expected Perception	3.84	0.50	7.54	0.00

* <.05

Discussion

The study used SERVQUAL with five dimensions as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy to analyze students' expected and perception of the service of Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages. As the findings showed, the difference between students' expected and perception of service quality provide by Jilin Huaqiao University of Foreign Languages do exist. According to Saowaluck Ngamdustsadeepirom(2004) who studied Parents' Expectations, Perceptions and Satisfactions of Top Ten Known Centers in Bangkok. Her research described that for all of the five dimensions expected perceptions of service agreement level were showed in the high level. This indicates that the good service quality was expected from the Top Ten Known Centers in Bangkok. According to Suwannee Sao-ong(2005) that the students expected the university provide modern facilities and equipment (buildings ,classrooms). Her study showed the facilities and equipment of university is part of the service quality that students are more valued. In this study, students also have very high expectation on the service of instructors and in line with Cook, C. & Thompson. (2000). Their study suggested the instructors to monitor their services to ensure they meet students' expectations, avoiding the possibility that negative feedback will adversely affect the enrolment. According to Hong Kong Fitness center Rushton(1997), the center suggest that the service dimension of assurance was the most important in evaluating the overall quality of services.

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